Alzheimer’s Disease Updates for Nurse Practitioners

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INTRODUCTION

• Alzheimer’s disease (AD) currently affects an estimated 6.5 million American adults aged 65 years and older.
• Without medical intervention to prevent, slow, or cure the disease, the burden of AD could grow to nearly 14 million by 2060.
• More than 70% of practicing NPs provide primary care services, and an increasing number of older adults, including Medicare recipients, are utilizing NPs as their primary care providers.
• Less than 12% of NPs report specialized education focused on geriatric care. As the burden of AD is expected to grow, there is an urgent need to equip NPs with the most up-to-date recommendations and emerging research on AD care.
• Continuing education focused on the diagnosis and management of AD, including early detection of MCI, is needed to improve the confidence and aptitude of NPs to promote optimal AD care.

OBJECTIVES

The goal was to develop a CE activity for NPs that addresses knowledge and practice gaps in Alzheimer’s Disease care through the following LOs:

1. Compare strategies for evaluating cognitive impairment in adults
2. Examine recent and emerging research on the utility of imaging and biomarkers for AD diagnosis
3. Summarize current FDA-approved treatments for AD and emerging treatments on the horizon
4. Integrate nonpharmacological strategies to improve outcomes for patients with AD
5. Identify communication strategies to utilize with patients and caregivers
6. Distinguish which patients will benefit from referral to specialty care

RESULTS

REACH & DEMOGRAPHICS

- During the 12-month activity, 9,994 clinicians registered
  - Of the 6,626 clinicians who completed the activity:
    - 5,358 (81%) were NPs
    - 4,388 (66%) were certified in family practice
    - 1,180 (18%) were certified in adult/gerontology care
    - 1,771 (27%) were in a family practice, 479 (7%) in a geriatrics practice, 446 (7%) in a primary care practice, and 298 (5%) in an IM practice

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RESULTS

KNOWLEDGE CHANGE

Cognitive evaluation and diagnosis (LOS 1, 2)

- Q1: Patient in LA who is likely to have AD
  - Pre: 42% correct, Post: 69%
  - P < .0001

- Q3: Patient in LA who is likely to have AD
  - Pre: 42% correct, Post: 69%
  - P < .0001

Current and emerging AD treatments (LO 3)

- Q7: Nonpharmacologic strategies, communication, and referral (LOs 4, 5 & 6)
  - Q4: Relative increase in learners able to correctly identify the maintenance of solid engagement as the cue that should be recommended to most patients with newly diagnosed AD
    - Pre: 36%, Post: 85%
    - P < .0001

- Q5: Relative increase in learners able to correctly identify the maintenance of solid engagement as the cue that should be recommended to most patients with newly diagnosed AD
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- Q6: Relative increase in learners able to correctly identify the maintenance of solid engagement as the cue that should be recommended to most patients with newly diagnosed AD
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RESULTS

CONFIDENCE CHANGE

- Ability to evaluate cognitive impairment in adults
  - Pre (mean, 3.8) Post (mean, 3.9)
  - ~231% more registrants and completers than estimated

- Ability to summarize current FDA-approved treatments for AD
  - Pre (mean, 3.2) Post (mean, 3.5)

- Ability to integrate nonpharmacological strategies to improve outcomes for patients with AD
  - Pre (mean, 3.3) Post (mean, 3.5)

RESULTS

QUALITATIVE PHONE INTERVIEWS (N = 12)

- Unfailed content recall: Evidence-based practices, Cognitive assessment tools, Reinforcement of current practices
- Review of medications impacting cognition confirmed existing practices
- Learners made adjustments to increase diligence in minimizing cognitive impairments
- Barriers to practice change: Patient educational challenges, Safety and support issues, Systemic and logistical barriers

CONCLUSIONS

• The program reached the right target audience—primarily NPs in family practice, primary care, geriatrics, internal medicine, or neurology
• There was a substantial demand for education on the topic of Alzheimer’s Disease management
• Based on differences between pre- and post-activity results, knowledge increased by a significant 42% (P < .001)
• Confidence increased significantly across 3 specific patient care strategies
• More than half of learners planned to enhance their medication review for patients with dementia

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